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L E T T E R

T O T H E

REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

BY MARIA DE FLEURY.

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*And the Servant of the Lord must not strive; but be
gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness
Instructing those that oppose themselves 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.*

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T O T H E

REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

SIR,

IN perusing a new publication of your's, intituled, "The Modern Plasterer Detected, and his untempered Mortar discovered" the text which I have chose for a motto to this epistle, struck my mind—I wish it had also struck your's, when you was writing that piece;—it might, in a great measure, have saved me the trouble of writing, and you the pain of reading this; however, though it was then most certainly out of sight and out of mind, I hope, through grace, to keep it constantly in view, while I offer to your serious consideration, a few thoughts on
First, The spirit in which you wrote.

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Secondly

Secondly, The persons against whom you wrote.

Thirdly, The subject on which you wrote: and

Fourthly, The consequences which may, and doubtless, will arise, from your publishing the book in question.

First, The spirit in which you wrote.

If you thought yourself called upon, and that it was your duty to vindicate either yourself or the truth, you undoubtedly had a right to do it; but it should have been done in that spirit of meekness and gentleness which becomes the gospel. "The weapons of our warfare, (says an inspired apostle,) are spiritual, not carnal;" and a good cause, vindicated in a bad manner, always loses ground. A minister of the gospel, Sir, is a dignified character, and it is expected, peculiarly of such, that they be men of peace, meek and gentle; and whatever opposition they may meet, or whatever contests they may be properly and providentially called to engage in, it is expected that they exercise some degree of patience, some degree of gentleness towards all men, whether they be brethren, or those that are without, in meekness,

ness, instructing those that oppose themselves. How strange to see a flood of reproach and rancour, a flood of bitterness and opprobrious language, low scurillity, and envenomed railing, flow from the pen of a man who stands in the character of a disciple and minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. I am sorry I am constrained to add, just such a torrent of bitter waters flows thro' almost every page of your pamphlet; and if the streams be such, what must the fountain be from whence they flow? if the language be so unbecoming and shocking, what must the spirit and temper which inspired that language be?—That I may not be supposed to injure you, Sir, in this matter, I shall take the trouble to extract a few passages from your work, with the greatest faithfulness; and then appeal to every candid mind, whether they bear any similitude to Paul's exhortation to Timothy, in my motto.

1. " Sir, Ham Cottish, barren of light, and barren of life." page 9.

2. " A consecrated bowl of negus." p. 10.

3. " This apology seems needless, for
" however unequal you may think yourself
" to this task, yet my thoughts are far other-

“ wise; for I think there is no man more
 “ proper to slander the servants of God, and
 “ their service, than such an one as yourself.
 “ Men that can desert the honest labour
 “ of the hodd, trowel, brush, lime and hair,
 “ and jump into a surplice, a gown and cas-
 “ sock, read the established church service,
 “ without any call or ordination from God
 “ or man, and run to Oxford or Cambridge,
 “ for a few incoherent scraps of Greek, when
 “ they cannot write common sense in their
 “ mother-tongue, hide his religion and pro-
 “ fession, in order to skulk by stealth, into
 “ the establishment, though God discover his
 “ hypocrisy, blast his measures, and resist
 “ his pride, is a man that is qualified for
 “ any thing but the ministry of God’s word,
 “ and a profession of his name.” p. 13.

It ill becomes Mr. Huntington, to re-
 proach a fellow-labourer in Christ’s Vine-
 yard, with being bred to a mechanical em-
 ploy; he should remember, he has been
 himself a coal-heaver, a gardener, and a
 cobbler.—How strange would it have ap-
 peared, if Peter had quarrelled with John
 because he was bred a fisherman?

“ I

“ I wish, sir, that you would desire your
 “ schoolmistress to set you a few more scrip-
 “ ture lessons, before you attempt to ap-
 “ pear again in the office of an usher.” p. 15.

“ You and your combination.” p. 21.

“ After I have shaved off your downy
 “ beards, and docked your skirts close by the
 “ buttocks, I hope you will tarry at Jericho,
 “ until your beards be grown, before you
 “ return again, 2 Sam. x. 4. 5.” p. 32.

“ I could wish that you would let the
 “ inner man alone, for you are intire stran-
 “ gers to one another. You are ignorant of
 “ the father of him, the conception of him,
 “ the formation of him, the nature of him,
 “ the features of him, the food of him, and
 “ the disposition of him. Therefore, have
 “ thou nothing to do with that just man.”
 p. 41.

“ You know neither law nor gospel. You
 “ are an entire stranger, both to the know-
 “ ledge of God, and to the ignorance of
 “ yourself.” p. 44.

“ None but the devil, ever sent such men
 “ as you into a pulpit.” p. 59.

“ When such graceless macaronies as you
 “ mount a rostrum.” p. 62.

“ I have no more opinion of his faith,
 “ and the state of his soul, than I have of
 “ the heart, holiness and good works, of
 “ you and the Revd. Mr. Belly, of Graves-
 “ end; who, I believe, are just as much
 “ converted to God, and commissioned to
 “ preach his gospel, as Simon Magus, or
 “ Alexander the coppersmith,—whom the
 “ Devil raised up and sent out, &c. &c.”

p. 70.

“ I cannot afford to get out of pocket
 “ by chastising a school-boy. I am obliged
 “ to deal with you, as an antagonist, as I
 “ used to do with a sparrow, when I carried
 “ a gun; that is, rank you among those that
 “ are not worth a charge.” p. 71.

How can this be, sir? when you are dis-
 charging all the artillery you can muster
 against this very contemptible antagonist.

“ A spouting club.” Letter to Mr. H.

These few extracts may serve for a speci-
 men of the whole, and they are sufficient
 for me to ground this question upon; Is
 this the spirit of the gospel?—does this lan-
 guage become the seriousness and dignity of
 a minister of Jesus Christ, “ the servant of the
 Lord, who must not strive, but be gentle
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unto all men ; apt to teach, patient, in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves."—Every candid, impartial mind, and your own heart, sir, will I know, answer this question in the negative. And even supposing your opponents had treated you with equal rudeness, which, according to your report, is not the case, yet you know who has said, See that no man render railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing, which most becomes the servant of the Lord.

Secondly, The persons against whom you wrote.

And here, sir, give me leave to assure you, that I am not one of the evangelical association.—I have the honor and happiness to be personally acquainted with some of them, and I believe they are most of them so well, and so publicly known, and their characters so long established, both as to doctrine, and life that the Churches of Christ, of every denomination, deservedly esteem them, as faithful ambassadors of the Lord Jesus, able ministers of the New Testament ; and as such, esteem them highly in love, for their works sake ; and are not a little grieved and displeased, at the illiberal and unchristian manner, in which you have

treated them. But supposing for a moment, they were what you represent them. "A spouting club, combined together against you, ignorant of God and themselves, of law and gospel;" in a word, that they were carnal, unconverted men, it would have been wisdom to have passed them over in silence. An able faithful minister of the gospel, whose doctrine and life, will stand the test of truth and candour, can surely have nothing to fear from, and is vastly superior to, every such combination. But if you chose to notice them, and to vindicate yourself from any aspersions they might have raised against you, it should have been done not with rage and levity, but with seriousness and in the spirit of meekness, as "the servant of the Lord," who must not strive, but is commanded to be gentle to all men. Is it any wonder that unconverted men know not the truth? do you expect them to know it? why be angry with them for their ignorance? can a blind man open his own eyes? they are greater subjects of pity and prayer, than indignation and contempt, especially if we remember, such were we. You know, sir, there was a time when you was ignorant of God
and

and yourself, of law and gospel ; and if you are not so now, it is grace alone has made the difference. Thus supposing them to be just such as you have described them, your conduct towards them has been the very reverse of what it ought to have been.

But supposing them to be (as they really are) your brethren in Christ, your fellow-labourers in the gospel, able and faithful ministers of the New Testament, called to that great work, both by God and man ; in what kind of light must you appear ? how unjustifiable, nay, how highly criminal is your conduct towards them ? Surely, if you are commanded to be patient and gentle unto all men, more especially to these. If they were to be blamed or reprov'd, you might have discharged your duty, even with some degree of sharpness, if necessary, but still remembering the apostle's exhortation, with gentleness and meekness ; but this you have totally laid aside, and with great bitterness and rancour, declare that they have no more grace than Simon Magus, and that it is the Devil that sent them into the ministry : O fie ! sir, look well to your own soul, and your own ministry, and leave others to God.

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Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? I think, sir, there is a favourite passage of your's, Luke vi. 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall men give into your bosom, for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. Now if this promise be fulfilled to you, and the railing you so plentifully bestow upon others, be as plentifully returned into your own bosom, it will make both your ears tingle, though it may not stop your mouth; but I spare you, and leave that for others. I come now to the third thing I had to consider; namely,

The subject on which you wrote.

It is impossible to form any proper idea of the sermon, on which you so largely comment, as the evangelical association have not yet published it. You have retailed a part of it to us in scraps, but I could as easily form a judgment by a few mangled limbs covered with blood and mire, torn from a dead body, whether the person when living was handsome or not, as pronounce on the merit of this sermon, from the deranged fragments you have laid before us: The
subject

subject is important, and if I understand the preacher right, sir, you have most grossly misunderstood him. I apprehend he is considering the law of God, as the rule of a believer's conduct. You represent him considering the law as a covenant of works: there is a most material difference between these two propositions, the one is strictly agreeable to the analogy of faith, the other totally repugnant to it. If I understood him as establishing the law, as a covenant of works, I would renounce his doctrine, and pity the preacher; but I view him in quite another light. I am far from thinking you, sir, an antinomian, but I believe your error lies here, you do not distinguish between the law, as a covenant of works, and as a rule of the believer's conduct; and yet they are very distinguishable, and ought never to be jumbled together: we ought not, in order to establish one glorious truth, strike out another; no, let us embrace the whole, every part of truth is precious, and not to be parted with: may the spirit of truth, make us diligent enquirers after truth; what we know not, may he teach us; and what we do know, may he enable us to adorn, by shewing

shewing forth a good conversation in all the meekness of wisdom.

The law, as a covenant of works, has nothing to do with the believer in Jesus. It cannot curse him, because his surety has redeemed him from its curse, by bearing it himself, in his own body on the cross. It has no commanding power over him, because it is completely fulfilled, magnified and made honourable by Jehovah his righteousness, in the believers stead: and thus being stript of its horrors and terrors, its thunders and lightnings, the believer can view it without dismay, and sees in it, a bright display of the justice, righteousness and purity of his reconciled God and father in Christ Jesus: he admires its beauty, he delights in its holiness, and cannot fail of pronouncing it with Paul, to be spiritual, holy, just and good; he longs to have it wrote upon his heart; and he knows, the more he is conformed to it in the spirit of his mind, the more it will become the rule of his conduct. Where shall we find a better rule? Is it not consummate perfection? a glorious transcript of the divine will? Where shall we find a brighter pattern to copy after? You will say,
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the Lord Jesus is to be the christian's example: I grant it, but was not his whole life spent in obedience to the law? was it not the rule according to which he squared all his thoughts, words and actions? It was perfectly in his heart, and his life was perfectly conformed to it: and therefore to follow the example of Christ, is in other words, to make the law a rule of conduct. To the Saviour, it was a covenant of works; but to the believer, it is not so; he receives it from the hand of Christ, as the directory by which he should walk, during his journey through the wilderness, to the heavenly Canaan. You will say, the believer is exhorted to walk in the spirit: I acknowledge it, for he cannot walk according to the law, as a rule, any further than he walks in the spirit; the heart must be made spiritual and holy, before the life can be so, and when it is made so, it must be kept so by the same spirit. You allow that God has promised to write the law upon the hearts of his people; why then should he abrogate and take it away as a rule of their conduct? there is an absurdity in supposing such a thing: Give me
leave

leave to remind you, that all the preceptive part of the New Testament, is an explanation of the moral law, and an inforcement of it, upon the believer in Jesus, as the rule of his gratitude and duty, though he is perfectly delivered from it, as a covenant of works. The gospel, properly speaking, knows nothing of commands or precepts, it is a rich display of free grace, free pardon, free justification, and free salvation, to lost, perishing, condemned sinners, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; and it is therefore made up of gracious declarations, and absolute promises, the precepts are therefore no part of the gospel, they are parts of the law, but they are connected with the gospel, as the law has ceased to be a covenant of works, and is become subservient to the covenant of grace. I wish, sir, you would read and study Dr. Herman Witsius, on the œconomy of the covenants; and if you could get a sight of his "Pacific Reflections, &c." in the English language, as you do not understand the latin: (there are but two copies; if I was personally acquainted with you, I could favour you with a sight of one of them;) you would
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there find this matter set in the clearest light possible, and I dare say, much to your profit and edification.

You cannot take away the law, as a rule of conduct, without taking away all the preceptive part of the New Testament, which properly belongs to the moral law, and is no further connected with ~~the~~ gospel, than, as I said before, the law ceasing to be a covenant of works, is become subservient to the covenant of grace.

The apostle Paul, in the seventh of the Romans, speaks of two laws which he served; he says, "With the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." Paul's flesh, his unrenewed, unregenerated part, served the law of sin, which was in his members, warring against the law of his mind. Paul found the carnal mind that was in him, was enmity against God; for it was not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be; but he solemnly declares, that with his mind, his renewed part, the new creation in his soul, he served the law of God. Was Paul legal? Was he making the law a covenant of works? no such thing. He was dead to the law, as a covenant of works, but he did
not

not view it as a nonentity, he acknowledged himself under the law to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21. and desired to serve it, to obey it in the inmost recesses of his soul; and, in all his life and conversation, to glorify him who had redeemed him from all its penalties, and become the end of it for righteousness to him. If the law had now no existence, as a rule of conduct, why did Paul himself serve the law? why serve a thing that has no existence? either Paul has made a blunder here, or, the law of God remains to be served in the hearts and lives of God's saints, as the rule of their gratitude and duty.

I come fourthly, to mention a few consequences which may, and doubtless will arise, from the publication of your pamphlet.

In the first place, it must tend greatly to lessen Mr. Huntington, in the esteem of his candid friends. I am persuaded, there is not a man of sense, candour and moderation, amongst your followers, one whose mind is free from bigotry and personal prejudice, that will peruse, and calmly consider your book, for one hour, and not be hurt, exceedingly hurt at it. The spirit in which you wrote, they must condemn, even if they do
not

not understand the matter in question; and if they do, they will be amazed at the unfair misrepresentations put upon plain words, and honest meanings; of which, had I time and opportunity, I would point out a multitude: but the size to which this letter has swelled, will not admit of it here, neither do I intend this as an answer to your pamphlet, but only as a few crude thoughts upon it. Secondly, how many weak minds, who attend the ministry of those gentlemen against whom you level your ill-judged artillery, may be wounded; and that which is lame, be turned out of the way; being taught to think their own ministers erroneous, they may be supposed to cry out, What is truth? and where shall we find it? And how much distress will this occasion them, even if it does not turn them quite out of the way? which perhaps it may some. And again, How will the enemies of all truth triumph? "Ah! (say they,) so would we have it; they are falling out among themselves, and there is no truth in any of them." While the people of God are grieved to see the servants of God insulted, a part of his truth denied, and those quarrelling with one another who ought to be united

united, as the heart of one man, against the common enemy. Satan will gain a great advantage, and the Holy Spirit of God, the God of truth and peace, be grieved and quenched; and where will all the blame lay, but upon him who stirs up all this fire, by a restless spirit of error, contention and bitterness?

Before I conclude, permit me, Sir, to advise you, as a friend, whenever you take up your pen to write upon the great things of God, to look well that your eye is singly to his glory, that your motive is the pure love of truth, and that you never fail of seeking, by humble prayer, for the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit; when this is the case, I am persuaded, God will never leave you to your own spirit, nor suffer you to defend his truth in such a manner as to bring disgrace and scandal upon it: for even supposing you to be on the side of truth, you have dishonoured that truth, by giving way to a spirit totally unbecoming its sublime dignity.

Philotas, was a young officer of the first rank in the army of Alexander the Great; he was very full of himself, and in consequence
of

of that, treated all the other officers with great haughtiness and insolence; the consequence was fatal, his father, Parmenio, foresaw this, and said to him one day, " My son, make thyself less." Now I do not say to you, Mr Huntington, make thyself less, I know it is beyond your power to do it; but this I say, seek to be made less. Indeed, Sir, you are too great by half; I mean in your own eyes and esteem: you know the great apostle of the Gentiles says of himself, that he was less than the least of all saints, he felt himself so; but I appeal to your own heart, whether you do not think yourself the most extraordinary, and almost, if not quite, the most able and faithful minister now existing. Perhaps you are not altogether sensible that you are thus high-minded, but others can see it in you very plainly, your conduct and writings prove it; now, to walk humbly is the way to walk surely, and only those are exalted in the sight of the Lord, who are debased and little in their own: I do not question your being called of God, both as a christian and a preacher, neither do I dispute your being possessed of gifts and abilities; but this I know, you will shine a great deal brighter

brighter in each character, when you are less sensible that you possess them. When you have learned to esteem others better than yourself; then you will know how to treat them with courtesy and brotherly love, and be less fond of cutting off ears and heads, and of dealing about firebrands, arrows and death. I treat you with plainness, Sir, but it is a friendly plainness, it is my duty to be faithful; and, if you are wise, you will not be offended at it, but profit by it: you know Solomon says, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser;" which that you may be, I commend you to the tuition and guidance of him "that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy."

I am, Sir, 18 AP 68

your humble servant,

MARIA DE FLEURY.

A LOVER OF TRUTH AND PEACE.

November 27, 1787.

F I N I S.